

Servius, *On Final Syllables, To Aquilinus*

translated by L. K. M. Maisel

from the Latin edition of H. Keil (*Grammatici Latini* IV).

Published 06.2021.

Note: Breves and macrons (e.g., *ō* and *ō̄* for short and long *o*, respectively) have been added for clarification, but are not part of the transmitted text.

On Final (Syllables) to Aquilinus

<preface>

Servius Honoratus to Aquilinus, greetings!

As you proposed, I have provided a brief and orderly account of the natures of word-final (*ultimae*) syllables. My daring in this matter is defended by your command; for since many have ignored this labor as easy and self-evident, they have rendered it more difficult.

Although we have an account of letter and syllable in the *Arts* of Donatus, yet for the sake of abbreviation, I have excerpted some things from these which I believe to be useful for the understanding of meters.

<word-initial syllables>

So, we shall consider the first syllables of all parts of speech in two manners, by nature and position. Nature has three aspects (*tripertita est*); for we can conclude that a syllable is long either (1) because of a diphthong, like *ae oe au eu ei*, or (2) by example – for it is asked whether a syllable is long or short, e.g., in *Musa mihi causas memora*¹ –, or (3) or through compounds, e.g., if you do not know the value of *pīus*, you can conclude what the value of *pī* is from the compound *impīus*. However, in a certain number, this method fails. For when we say *nūbere*, the *nu* is long; yet when we say *innūba* or *pronūba*, the *nu* becomes short in the compound. But it so happens that this is rarely found. Position(al length) is when two vowels follow a short vowel, like *ārma*; or one double (consonant), like *āxis*, *Mēzentius* or *māior*;² or one consonant and one vowel in the role of a consonant, like in *āt Iuno* or *āt Venus*.³

And if any part of speech is composed from prepositions, we recognize the first syllables from these. For just as almost every syllable will remain the same when in a compound, so the preposition will remain the same, as with *īneptus*. But among the prepositions, *ād*, *ōb*, *īn* and *sūb* are used differently in (different) words. For they are short when they extend to form a disyllable word, as in *adit obit init subit*; they are ambivalent when they make a trisyllable, as in *adicit obicit inicit subicit*; they are always long when they form a tetrasyllable from themselves, as in *adicio obicio inicio subicio*.⁴

Further, those which are written with *que* or *pre* in their first syllables are long, with the exception of *prētium*, *prēmo*, *prēces* and *quēror* – that is, *quērellam depono*⁵ –, as well as those (word forms) which can arise from these by derivation or declension, or from the conjunction *quē*.

1 The metrical example would clarify the length of the vowel that is being investigated; e.g., the *u* in *Musa* must be long because the first syllable of a line is always long.

2 *X* is /ks/, *z* has different pronunciations but is generally counted as long, and *i* is written once even when the sound is geminated – otherwise, we would spell *maiior*.

3 *I* and *v* here function as consonants, but they are still called vowel letters. Phonologically, this is not a special case.

4 Historically, the explanation is rather that *-it* represents /it/, but *-icit* and *-icio* /jikit/, but *i* can only be doubled to stand for two separate vowels, not when it represents /ji/ or geminated /j:/ . It appears that in Servius' pronunciation, the /j/ has been dropped. In any case, the distinction he makes between the trisyllables and tetrasyllables is artificial.

5 A gloss on *queror*, I think in distinction to *quaeror*.

Further, contrariwise, out of the prepositions, *de* and *pro* are short in compounds, as in *dēhinc dēinde prōfectus prōfessus prōfusus prōfanus prōfatus prōavus prōnepos* and so on.

Further, there are a certain number of words which change their first syllables depending on tense, and these – which are collected below – are long in the the entire past perfect, the entire past plusquamperfect, and in the future, but of the subjunctive mood only, while they are short in the other moods and tenses, like these following: *lēgo lēgi lēgeram lēgero, fāveo fāvi fāveram fāvero, vēnio vēni vēneram vēnero, fūgio fūgi fūgeram fūgero, fācio fēci fēceram fēcero, sēdeo sēdi sēderam sēdero, fōdio fōdi fōderam fōdero, vīdeo vīdi vīderam vīdero, vōveo vōvi vōveram vōvero, fōveo fōvi fōveram fōvero, iūvo iūvi iūveram iūvero, āgo ēgi ēgeram ēgero, ēmo ēmi ēmeram ēmero, lāvo lāvi lāveram lāvero, ōdio ōdi ōderam ōdero, ēo īvi īveram īvero, sīno sīvi sīveram sīvero, sēro sēvi sēveram sēvero, quēro quīvi quīveram quīvero, cāveo cāvi cāveram cāvero.*

Further, contrariwise, we can find words which are long in the present tense and short in the past, like these following: *pōno pōsui, cōgo cōegi, dō dēdi, stō stēti.*

Further, all words which gain a syllable at the beginning in the past tenses are short in their first syllables, like *pendeo pēpendi, tondeo tōtondi, posco pōposci, curro cūcurri, tendo tētendi, pendo pēpendi.*

<word-internal syllables>

We can judge middle syllables in three manners, by position, diphthongs or accent; and we have already treated position <and diphthongs> above.

Now, 'accent' is so called as if it were *adcantus*,⁶ because it lets us discern the syllables for the intonation (*ad cantilenam*) of the voice. These accents of the voice which are necessary with a view to what we are treating are two, the short and the long. The short is when we pronounce the middle syllables without any lingering (*mora*) of the voice, like *moénĭa tábŭla*. The long is when we express the middle syllables with a certain lingering, like *fortŭna natŭra*.⁷

However, we must know that those (syllables) in verbs which show a short *i*, and which change this *i* into *e* when they become middle (syllables), like *legis lege legēre*, are always short⁸ – except when they are followed by the three consonants *b*, *m* or *t*, as in *legēbam legēmus legētur*. Others are better judged by their accents.⁹

In trisyllables and tetrasyllables and so on, this accent must be considered in the following way, that, if it is asked of what syllables *āmicissīmōrŭm* consists, we say that the first is short on account of an example, like *nimium dilexit āmicum*; we find that the second has a long accent;¹⁰ the third is long by position; the fourth is short by accent, because, when we say *amicissĭmus*, we find that the penultimate has a short accent;¹¹ and the fifth is long by accent.

<word-final syllables>

Now, as for the value of the final (syllable), the rules given below will show this for each part of speech.

The nominative singular has the following short (syllables): *a* as in *Musă*, *e* as in *sedilĕ*, *o* as in *virgŏ*,¹² *u* as in *cornŭ*, *el* as in *mĕl*, *il* as in *vigĭl*, *ul* as in *consŭl*, *m* as in *tectŭm*, *en* as in *carmĕn*, *ir* as

6 This is a historically correct etymology. *Ad + cantus* translates the Greek *pros-odia*.

7 In effect, Servius is saying that, if the penultimate syllable is stressed, it is long, but he describes stressed open syllables in terms of their *length* relative to unstressed open syllables. In the examples given here, I use the acute (*á*) to represent the stress on the antepenultimate syllable if the penultimate is short, while the circumflex represents a stressed long penultimate (*û*).

8 As opposed to the second conjugation, *docēs docē docēre*.

9 This may suggest that the accentuation of third conjugation verbs had been assimilated to that of second conjugation.

10 This still by considering *amicus*.

11 I.e., is unstressed.

12 Long in classical pronunciation.

in *vīr*, or as in *doctōr*, *t* as in *capūt*.¹³ Of these, the following are long in Greek words: *e* as in *Euterpē*, *o* as in *Didō*, *en* as in *liēn Sirēn*, *il* in one Etruscan word, namely *Tanaquīl*.

The following, next, are those which are long: *i* as in *frugī*, *ol* as in *sōl*, *an* as in *Titān*, *on* as in *Memnōn*, *in* as in *delphīn*, *as* as in *facultās*, *c* as in *hāc* and *allēc*.¹⁴ But in Greek words, a nominative ending in *as* is short if it has the genitive *dos*, as in *Arcās Arcados*, *Pallās Pallados*.

And *er* is long in Greek words, like *aethēr aēr*.

Further, the following are those which are long in monosyllables but short in disyllables, trisyllables, tertrasyllables and the other polysyllables: *ar* – monosyllables like *fār*, disyllables like *Caesār*; *er* – monosyllables like *vēr*, disyllables like *patēr*; *ur* – monosyllables like *fūr*, disyllables like *murmūr*; *is* – monosyllables like *glīs*, disyllables like *fortīs*; *al* – monosyllables like *sāl*, trisyllables like *Hannibāl*.

Further, the following are those which vary in the nominative and derive their rule from their own genitive: *es os us*. For when a nominative ends in the syllable *es*, it can be long in five ways, but short in two. So, it is long when it is a noun of the fifth declension, like *diēs diei*; it is also long when the genitive has the same number of syllables as the nominative, like *prolē̄s prolis*; thirdly, it is long when the genitive is one syllable longer but retains a long *e* in the middle, like *mercēs mercēdis*; fourth, it is long when they are monosyllabic nouns or derived from monosyllables, like *pēs bipēs sonipēs*; fifth, it is long when it has *i* before *es* in its ending, like *abiēs pariēs ariēs quiēs*. And it is shorted in two ways, when it has a short middle *e* in the genitive, like *segēs segētis*; or when the *e* changes into *i*, like *milēs militis*.

Further, monosyllabic *os* is long when it means mouths (*ora*), like *ōs oris*; if it means bones (*ossa*), it is short, like *ōs ossis*. On the other hand, when the syllable *os* occurs in disyllables or trisyllables, and if the middle syllable of the genitive remains long by nature, then it is long, like *nepōs nepōtis*; but if (the middle syllable of the genitive) is short or has a diphthong in the Greek genitive, it is short, like *conpōs conpōtis*, *Delōs Δήλου*.

Now, *us* is long when the genitive is longer and the *u* remains long, like *virtūs virtūtis*, *tellūs tellūris*, with the sole exception of *palus*, which ends in *dis* in the genitive, i.e., *palus palūdis*;¹⁵ hence: *sterilisque diu palūs aptaque remis*. But if the genitive is longer and the *u* remains short, or (the vowel in the genitive) is different, or (the genitive) is not longer, it is short, like *pectūs pectoris*, *vulgūs vulgi*.

(Ordinarily,) the genitive, dative and ablative are long.

But if a genitive either has *os* in its ending, following the Greeks, or (a word) belongs to the third declension, and its ablative ends simply in the letter *e*, then (the *e*) is short – with one exception, which is long, *ab hac famē*, because the ancients used to decline it as *huius famei*, not *huius famis*.

But the dative ending in *i* in Greek words is short, like *Palladī*.

The accusative in Latin words is always short; in Greek words it is only short when it ends in either *a* or *on*, like *Theseā Delōn*; otherwise it is long.

The vocative in Latin words is likewise short, except when it ends in *i*, like *Mercurī*; in Greek words, it is short, like *Alexī*. But when the vocative is like the nominative, it follows the rule of the nominative, like *haec paupertās* and *o paupertās*. In Greek words, it is long only in masculine words, like *Aeneā*; but when it ends in *e* it is short in Greek words as well, if its nominative ends in *os*, like *Phoebos Phoebē*.

The nominative, accusative and vocative plural is long in the masculine and feminine gender, but

¹³ Where only a consonant is given, the quality of the vowel is irrelevant.

¹⁴ In *hac*, it is the vowel that is long, and apparently the same is true for *allec*, but in *hoc*, the vowel is short and the *c* is geminated in pronunciation. In *lac*, both vowel and consonant are short.

¹⁵ This does not mean that *palūs* is strictly short, but that this reading and *palūs* both occur (Serv. *Aen.* 2.69).

short in neuter. Contrary to these, there are Greek nouns which, if they have an *a* or *e* before a final *s* and come from a genitive singular *dos*, then they are short in the masculine and feminine only, as in *huius Arcados*, *has Arcadēs*, *hos Arcadās*; otherwise, they are long.

The genitive plural is always short in Latin words, but always long in Greek words, like *Philaenōn*.

If the dative or ablative plural end in *is*, they are long, like *doctīs*; if in *bus*, they are short, like *agilibūs*; or, if the declension is Greek, a dative ending in *in* is short, like *Arcasīn*.

Nouns, pronouns and participles are contained in this rule.

But the declension of the pronoun differs in this one respect, that in monosyllables which end in vowels, like *mē*, or which consist of vowels only, like *ō*, are long in any case. But when the genitive ends with *us*, it is short, like *illiūs*; while the dative, as in the noun, is always long – except *mihi tibi sibi*, which can be used ambivalently. And in this way, the other cases take over the rule from the noun.

In all verbs (and in all) moods, tenses, numbers, persons and conjugations, *m* like *docebām*, *r* like *legebār*, *t* like *facerēt*, *us* like *nutriremūs* are short. But verbs ending in the letter *e* are short, like *legē*, and it is long only in the second person of the imperative mood from the second conjugation, like *docē*. But *es* is short, e.g., in *sum ēs* and the others which can be composed from these, like *adsum adēs*, *possum potēs*; in other words, it is long, like *docēs*. Further, *is* in the second person of the indicative mood is long only if it comes from the long third conjugation,¹⁶ like *nutrio nutrīs*, *volo vīs*; elsewhere, it is short. But *a* like *amā*, *i* like *nutrī*, *u* like *lectū*, *as* like *vocās*, *es* like *legerēs* and *c* like *fāc*¹⁷ are long.

In all adverbs, *l* like *semēl*, *r* like *paritēr*, *m* like *tām* are short. *N* is always short, like *forsitān*, with the exception of *nōn* and *ēn*. When adverbs end in *e*, those which derive from a noun and admit of all degrees of comparison are long, like *doctē doctius doctissimē*.¹⁸ But those which come from themselves, like *saepē*, or cannot be compared, like *ritē*, or which are deficient in comparison, like *benē malē*, are short. If they end in *i*, they are long, like *herī*, except for *quasī*, *ibī* and *ubī*. *O*, as in all parts of speech, can be used ambivalently, like *falso*.¹⁹ *S*, when it has an *a* before it, is long, like *aliās crās*; otherwise it is short, like *magīs*. But *a* like *unā*, *u* like *noctū*, *c* like *illūc* are long. Monosyllabic adverbs must be lengthened, like *hūc*, and so must those which derive from them, like *illūc*, with the exception of *bīs* and *tēr*.

Nearly all conjunctions are short. But those ending in *a* and *i* are long, with the exception of *itā*, *quā* and *nīsī*. Further, those which end in *n*, if they have an *i* before it, are long, like *sīn*.

Accusative prepositions, aside from those which end in *a* and the one monosyllable, *cīs*,²⁰ are short. Ablative prepositions, on the other hand, are long if they are those monosyllables which either consist of vowels, like *ā*, or end in vowels, like *dē*. But there is no doubt that the prepositions of both cases are all short.

And *re* is always short,²¹ like in *rēmitto*, except when *refert* means *distat*,²² as in the following: *praeterea iam nec mutari pabula rēfert*, and the one verb, *rēicio*,²³ as in: *rēice ne maculis infuscet uellera pullis / nascentum*.

All interjections are long if they are monosyllabic, like *heu*. But the others must be treated

16 This simply means third conjugation.

17 Classically, *fac* is short.

18 Classically, these also end in *ē*.

19 Does this mean Servius takes *falso* itself as ambiguous?

20 Classically, *cis* is also short.

21 In antiquity, prepositions are still considered as such when part of compounds – even if, like *re*, they appear only in compounds.

22 *Refert* was classically pronounced *rēfert*, but Servius seems to distinguish *rēfert* and *rēfert* as words of different meaning.

23 Classically, the *e* in *reicio* is short but the unwritten consonantal *i* between *e* and *i* is geminated.

according to the example of (other) parts of speech they resemble, like *papae*.²⁴

These rules must be observed in all parts of speech – except where they are long by diphthong or position.

²⁴ This looks like a noun and must be analyzed as if it were.